

*A GRANT PROPOSAL REQUESTING FUNDS FROM THE GIVE BACK  
YOGA FOUNDATION*



*YOGA OF 12-STEP RECOVERY AT  
NORTH SHORE RECOVERY HIGH  
SCHOOL*

*Prepared by Julia Avila Fall 2018*



North Shore Recovery High School  
112 Sohier Road  
Beverly, MA 01915  
978-922-3305

December 10, 2018

The Give Back Yoga Foundation  
Yoga of 12-Step Recovery Program  
Nikki Meyers  
900 Baseline Road 13B  
Boulder, CO 80302

Dear Ms. Meyers,

My name is Julia Avila and I am writing on behalf of North Shore Recovery High School. I am writing to respectfully request a grant in the amount of \$8,300 to instate a Yoga of 12-Step Recovery program within the school as a holistic, adjunctive treatment for adolescents with substance abuse disorders.

North Shore Recovery High School is an alternative high school that strives to aid children in their battles with diagnosed substance abuse disorders. The administration and faculty are determined to provide recovering students with a safe and supportive community, as well as an academic and therapeutic environment. The school fosters an ethic of honesty and respect and encourages accountability to oneself and the community. North Shore Recovery High School's goal is to prepare students for higher education, the military, or employment, while supporting their ongoing recovery. The requested grant would be used to fund a Yoga of 12-Step Recovery program in the school, which requires supplies, teacher training, and a teacher stipend.

A Yoga of 12-Step Recovery program would give students the opportunity to learn skills and practices that could possibly carry them through their life-long battles with addiction. This evidence-based program will be effective in addressing the physical, mental, and spiritual disease of addiction, as it connects the dots between the somatic approach of yoga and the cognitive approach of the 12-step recovery model. It is imperative that this program is introduced to North Shore Recovery High School, as adolescents with substance abuse disorders are often overlooked, despite being statistically one of the most at-risk demographics.

I appreciate your time and consideration. Please contact myself or Michelle Lipinski, the founder and director of North Shore Recovery High School, with any questions.

Sincerely,

Julia Avila  
Principle Investigator

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## *Statement of the Problem*

### *The Opioid Crisis*

Opioids refer to opiate-like substances, including natural, synthetic, and semi-synthetic opiates; such as Morphine, Codeine, Heroin, Oxycodone, and Fentanyl. These drugs are characterized as powerful painkillers that can cause intense feelings of well-being, elation, and happiness (MedlinePlus).

Drugs of this nature were initially prescribed by healthcare professionals in the late 1990's. At the time, pharmaceutical companies assured the medical community that these painkillers would not be addictive. Healthcare providers then felt comfortable prescribing these substances at greater rates. This resulted in widespread dispersion and abuse of such medications before it was apparent that they were indeed highly addictive (National Institution on Drug Abuse).

Today, the opioid epidemic continues to impact citizens across the nation. However, it is evident that some regions are being hit harder than others.

In the past few years, the opioid-related death rate in Massachusetts has surpassed the national average. In fact, 2014 marked the first year since 1999 that the fatal overdose rate in MA was double that of the nation. While opioid-related deaths have been on the rise across the country in the past decade, the situation in the Bay State has become especially worrying. It seems as though every community in Massachusetts has been impacted by this growing crisis.

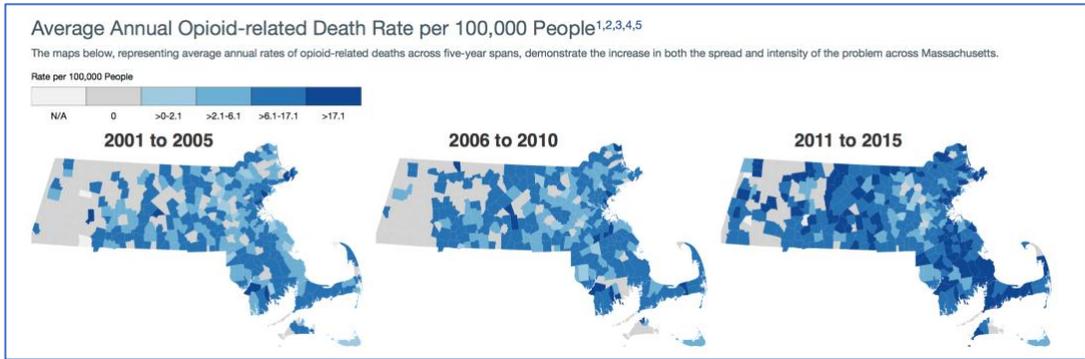


Figure 1

**At-Risk Youths**

*1 in 7 children under 18 admit to having used prescription pain killers without a prescription.*

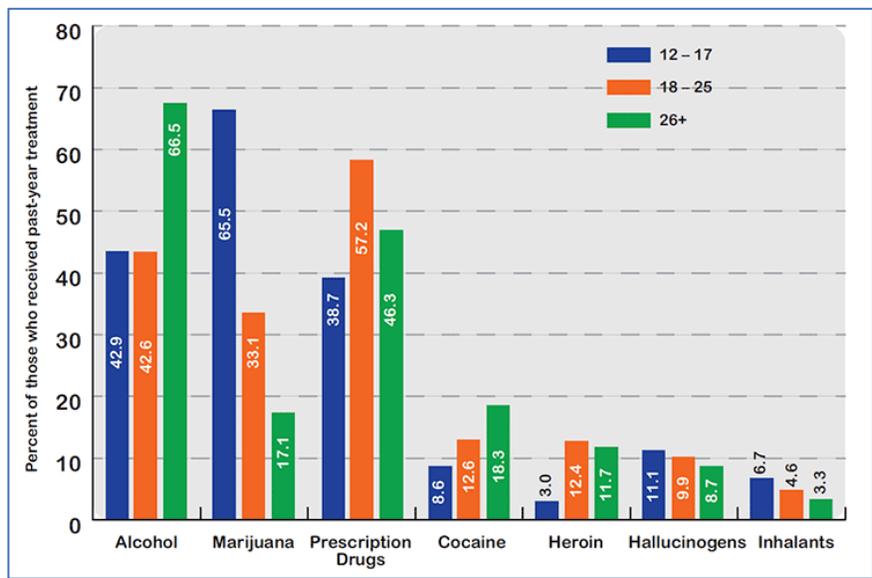


Figure 2

A vast majority of young adults have participated in some degree of substance abuse. By the time children are seniors in high school, almost 70% will have tried alcohol, half will have taken an illegal drug, nearly 40% will have smoked tobacco, and more than 20% will have used a prescription drug for a nonmedical purpose (National Institution on Drug Abuse).

There are a variety of reasons why a child may fall into substance abuse. Many who develop an addiction suffer from mental illness or experience physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

Adolescents are also impacted by the availability of drugs in the neighborhood, community, school, or among peers. The family environment is also important, as drug use in the home can increase the likelihood of a child using drugs. Some have even correlated substance abuse with genetics (MedlinePlus). However, a common element among all adolescents is their still-developing brains, which cause them to be more susceptible to substance use than adults.

The adolescent brain is often likened to a car with a fully functioning gas pedal, but weak breaks. This analogy is referring to the way in which young, developing brains encourage the release of dopamine, with little ability to control impulse. Drugs, unfortunately, can hijack this process. The “high” produced from substances like opioids floods the brain with much more dopamine than natural rewards could possibly generate. The immature brain, already struggling with self-control, is more likely to take drugs again to repeat the “high”. If the experience is in fact repeated, the brain reinforces the neural links between drug-taking and pleasure, therefore encouraging extended use and, possibly, addiction (National Institution on Drug Abuse).

The fight to curb the opioid epidemic in Massachusetts thus becomes an imperative battle to protect future generations. The percentage of opioid-related deaths in Massachusetts shows that young people are especially at risk, with opioids accounting for more than a quarter of fatalities in people ages 18-24 (Chapter55).

### *Treatment of Adolescent Substance Abuse Disorders*

A profound taboo continues to surround addiction and substance abuse disorders, especially in America's youths. In fact, only 10% of 12 to 17-year-olds needing substance abuse treatment receive any services. When they do get treatment, it is often for different reasons than adults. Most children with substance abuse disorders are referred by the juvenile justice system (National Institution on Drug Abuse).

As the opioid epidemic stretches across the region, Massachusetts has taken some action in providing alternative pathways to treatment for its youth population; including five publicly-funded recovery high schools across the state.

North Shore Recovery High School (NSRHS) is one of these high schools. It is located in the city of Beverly, right in the heart of the North Shore. This area, known for routes of heavy drug trafficking, is where opioids, specifically Heroin, run rampant. The school, in attempts to combat the opioid crisis, strives to meet the diverse needs of adolescents with diagnosed substance abuse disorders. The school was opened in 2006 under the guidance of the Northshore Education Consortium and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and DESE. It currently enrolls approximately 30-50 students. The mission is to provide students with a safe and supportive community in an academic and therapeutic environment, and their primary goal is to support ongoing recovery.

## *Statement of Request*

The Give Back Yoga Foundation (GBY) seeks to provide access to yoga and meditation practices for marginalized groups who may not have access otherwise. It is a registered national nonprofit under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. The organization funds and supports research-based, clinically tested yoga programs in underserved communities, and provides supplies and resources to help kick-start yoga programs. Ultimately, GBY aims to inspire grassroots social change and community cooperation through increased access to yoga and mindfulness practices (Give Back Yoga Foundation).

GBY has founded a variety of specialized yoga programs to support disadvantaged groups. One of their programs, Yoga of 12-Step Recovery (Y12SR), specifically fosters addiction recovery and preventing relapse through yoga.

Therefore, North Shore Recovery High School is seeking funds from the Give Back Yoga Foundation to implement a Yoga of 12-Step Recovery within the school. With this grant, regular yoga classes and workshops will become available to students at Northshore Recovery High School; a consortium for high school students with diagnosed substance abuse disorders. If successful, this project will collectively advocate for improved awareness and accessibility of holistic practices, such as yoga, for substance abuse intervention.

## *Description of Proposed Work*

### *Objectives and Goals*

The aims of this program are to:

- Introduce students with diagnosed substance abuse disorders to holistic practices that can aid them in their treatment and prevent relapse.
- Provide students with a method of supplemental treatment that they can practice in their everyday lives.
- Integrate physical movement with mindfulness and spiritual practices to encourage mind-body connections.
- Promote self-love, ownership, and body appreciation to deter destructive behaviors such as drug usage.
- Give students a healthy outlet to help them cope with triggers, drug cravings, and daily stressors.
- Further support adolescents with substance abuse disorders, who make up a marginalized group that often does not receive the community encouragement needed and, in turn, are subsequently criminalized and disadvantaged.

### *Methods and Practices*

GBY's program for substance abuse, Y12SR, combines "the ancient wisdom of yoga, the practical tools of 12-step programs, and the latest research on trauma healing and neurobiology." (Yoga of 12-Step Recovery), to create a unique program that confronts substance abuse disorders. It aims to provide a framework for a holistic recovery program that works in tandem

with traditional practices. GBY emphasizes that Y12SR serves all manifestations of addiction in a variety of communities. It also supports those who are affected by a loved one's addiction.

To implement a Y12SR program in NSRHS, the school will first need to hire a certified yoga instructor who can commit to obtaining specialized Y12SR training, and then lead three classes per week for the entirety of the 2019-2020 school year. NSRHS would like to find an instructor who has their 300-hour certification and at least five years of experience. It would also be optimal to hire an instructor who has experience working with children, teens, or underserved communities.

After an instructor has been hired and completed the necessary training, they will partner with the administration and faculty at NSRHS to construct a program, using the Y12SR framework, that will fit the students' needs. It is imperative that these parties collaborate to devise a program that will be engaging and effective, while encouraging students to feel empowered and strong.

NSRHS would like to include the program in their curriculum for the 2019-2020 academic year, and intend to treat it as an elective, such as a music or art class. It is expected that the Y12SR class will meet three times per week for an hour at a time. Within this hour, students will participate in various yoga sequences, group activities, and meditation sessions. Through these practices, the students will become more connected with their bodies, minds, and spirits, while supporting one another in a safe, therapeutic environment. This program is well aligned under NSRHS's mission, and it will further contribute to ongoing recovery.

Once the program has been set, the school will need to obtain materials. It is anticipated that yoga classes will be held within NSRHS for the sake of convenience. However, it is then imperative that the space is correctly equipped. It will be necessary to purchase yoga mats, supportive blocks, and flexibility straps for each student, as well as a few spare sets for the school to have on hand. This will ensure safety and comfort for the students while they are practicing. Other, unnecessary materials may include music, aromatherapy, therapeutic oils, guided meditation videos, Y12SR resources, and various readings from the yoga community; all of which will be obtained at the discretion of the instructor.

When NSRHS has finished all the preparations for the Y12SR program, the proposed project will be introduced to the students. There will also be a notice sent home to parents and guardians, explaining the program and inviting loved ones to a community yoga night where they will be introduced to the practice of yoga and its therapeutic effects. From there, the program will continue to meet three times a week for the duration of the 2019 Fall Semester. At the close of the Fall Semester, there will be a survey distributed to students and staff where they will have the opportunity to share their thoughts about the program. The feedback will be considered and any necessary adjustments will be made. The program will resume for the Spring Semester, and once again there will be a survey given to staff and students. This time, the results will help NSRHS determine if the program should be reinstated for the next academic year.

***Schedule***

June 2019	Interview and hire a certified yoga instructor
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July 2019	Hired instructor completes Y12SR certification
August 2019	Supplies and materials acquired
Wednesday August 28, 2019	Fall Semester begins
Wednesday September 4, 2019	General meeting with students to discuss the program and expectations. Materials and supplies will be distributed.
Friday September 6, 2019	Community Yoga Night for students and family
Monday September 9, 2019	First class – students will gradually learn the basics of the yoga practice as well as recovery strategies and mindfulness exercises
<i>Classes will continue to be held three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.</i>	
Friday December 20, 2019	Students and faculty will be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding the Y12SR program and its effectiveness.
<i>The feedback from the survey will be used to adjust and improve the program.</i>	
Thursday January 2, 2020	Spring Semester begins
Monday January 6, 2020	Y12SR resumes, again meeting three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
Friday June 12, 2020	Students and faculty will again submit a survey, this time to determine whether the program should be reinstated the following school year.
July 2020	The results of the questionnaire will be considered and the school will decide whether the program should continue in the next academic year. If so, necessary funds and supplies will be evaluated and pursued.

### ***Discussion of Alternatives***

The Y12SR program will be mandatory for all students as an element of their curriculum for the entirety of the 2019 Fall Semester. However, if it is not well-received by the majority of students and staff at NSRHS, the school will discuss the possibility of instating it as a voluntary, after-

school activity for those who are interested. If this is the case, the program in essence would not change. Meetings and classes would still be held tri-weekly in the school for all students who wish to participate. They would simply be taking place after-school, as an extracurricular activity, rather than being part of the school day. The purpose of this adjustment would be to encourage those who are engaged with the program, and to seek alternative methods of supplemental treatment for those who do not find it effective.

## *Description of Available Facilities*

### *North Shore Recovery High School*



*Figure 3*

North Shore Recovery High School is part of the Northshore Education Consortium which is located at 112 Sohier Road in Beverly, Massachusetts. NSRHS shares a building with the other schools and program in the consortium, but has still been allocated its own space. The NSRHS site is capable of holding all 50 students and has some larger spaces, such as the cafeteria, but whether they will be fit to host large yoga classes is questionable. Therefore, the school's director and the principle investigator will be evaluating the spaces in NSRHS's facility as well as available sites in the Northshore Education Consortium.

Ultimately, NSRHS would like to keep the program on-site for ease and convenience. Therefore, this proposal is not requesting funding for additional, alternative facilities at this time. However, it can be noted that the available facilities and their capabilities will be assessed at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year, and may be subject to change.

## *Qualifications of Personnel*

### *Northshore Education Consortium*

The Northshore Education Consortium (NEC) was founded in 1975 and serves as one of the first regional collaborative organizations in Massachusetts. It is the largest provider of specialized services and education to children and adolescents on the North Shore. The NEC serves approximately 500 students from 54 districts in hopes of fostering successful learning experiences for all students, including those with special needs. In addition to intensive special education services for emotional, behavioral, and developmental disabilities, the NEC also runs North Shore Recovery High School. The consortium is managed by a board of directors, which includes a member from each district, either a superintendent or a school committee member, who is elected annually by each district's school community (Northshore Education Consortium).

### *NEC Board of Directors*

- Francine H. Rosenberg, M.Ed., Executive Director
- Dr. Steven Hiersche, Superintendent - Beverly Public Schools
- Mr. Anthony Pierantozzi, Superintendent - Nahant Public Schools
- Dr. Lisa Dana, Superintendent - Danvers Public Schools
- Mr. Jon Bernard, Superintendent - North Reading Public Schools
- Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent - Gloucester Public Schools
- Ms. Cara Murtagh, Superintendent - Peabody Public Schools
- Dr. Michael Harvey, Superintendent - Hamilton-Wenham School District
- Dr. John Doherty, Superintendent - Reading Public Schools

- Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent - Ipswich Public Schools
- Mr. Robert Liebow, Superintendent - Rockport Public Schools
- Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, Superintendent - Lynn Public Schools
- Ms. Margarita Ruiz, Superintendent - Salem Public Schools
- Ms. Jane Tremblay, Superintendent - Lynnfield Public Schools
- Ms. Pamela Angelakis, Superintendent - Swampscott Public Schools
- Ms. Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent - Manchester/Essex School District
- Dr. Scott Morrison, Superintendent - Tri-Town School Union
- Ms. Maryann Perry, Superintendent - Marblehead Public Schools
- Mr. Brian Forget, Superintendent - Triton Regional School District
- Dr. Kevin Lyons, Superintendent - Masconomet Regional School District

### ***North Shore Recovery High School***

NSRHS is a recovery high school that serves students aged 14-21 and seeks to aid them in all aspects of their recovery. The school is focused on creating individualized recovery plans, while still providing curriculum that is consistent with MA Framework including 504s and IEPs. It is jointly funded by MA-DPH and local school districts.

To make it all happen, the school employs highly qualified, DESE licensed staff who are sincerely dedicated to the well-being of all students. The faculty then integrates individualized treatment plans and counseling with comprehensive academic curriculum that is consistent with Massachusetts' standards. NSRHS students also participate in state-wide MCAS testing and work closely with their sending districts to comply with graduation requirements. It is just like

any other high school, only with an emphasis on honesty, mutual respect, and accountability. NSRHS hoped to assist underserved students in receiving their high school diplomas and to prepare them for higher education, the military, or employment (North Shore Recovery High School).

***Michelle Muffat Lipinski, Director of NSRHS***

Before arriving at NSRHS, Michelle Muffat Lipinski began her teaching career at an alternative high school in Salem, where she taught science. Eventually, she became the director of that school. However, she soon grew unsettled as she watched her students leave for rehab and come back looking healthy only to relapse again in a matter of weeks. When one of them fatally overdosed, she began to wonder what schools could do different to address substance abuse and addiction in adolescents. She ultimately went on to found North Shore Recovery High School, where she is the director (Cimini).

Lipinski has built her school on the understanding that “We [should] treat sick children like they’re sick and not like they’re bad,” (Cimini). This statement, which sums up Recovery High’s attitude towards its students, demonstrates Lipinski’s overarching philosophy. She is an educator who believes in creating an environment where students can be transparent, without fear of punishment, to establish pathway to healing.

***Julia Avila, Principle Investigator***

Julia is an undergraduate student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she studies English with specializations in the Study and Practice of Writing and Professional Writing and

Technical Communication. She grew up in Beverly, Massachusetts and was made very aware of the opioid epidemic in her hometown. Heroin, specifically, had disrupted the lives of many of her loved ones and community members. Julia attended Beverly Public Schools, and her high school was very close in proximity to NSRHS. She knew of the school, and deeply respected its dedication to those with substance abuse disorders.

Julia also practices yoga and has experienced many of its benefits first-hand. She primarily uses yoga for mental health and physical well-being, and encourages others to do the same. Julia intends to complete her own 200-hour yoga certification and become a licensed practitioner when she graduates from UMass. She supports integrating yoga into NSRHS, as she believes its effects could greatly contribute to the ongoing recovery of all students.

## Budget

In 2012-2013, the Give Back Yoga Foundation paid out \$ 361,074 in grants and program-related investments to organizations and individuals in the United States and around the world (GBY). North Shore Recovery High School is requesting \$8,300 to fund a Y12SR program within their institution.

### DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR A Y12SR PROGRAM IN NSRHS

■ Supplies ■ Teacher Training ■ Teacher Stipend

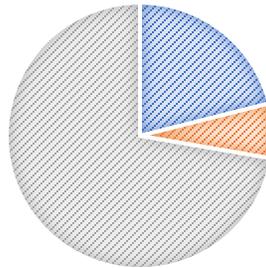


Figure 4

Supplies	\$1,750
Teacher Training	\$550
Teacher Stipend	\$6,000
<b>Total Funds Needed</b>	<b>\$8,300</b>

### ***Supplies***

NSRHS requires funding for supplies to instate a Y12SR program within the school. Equipment would include yoga mats, supportive blocks, and flexibility straps. The school intends to provide each child with their own set of equipment to promote ownership and interest among the student body. The cost of supplies is approximately \$35 per student, with a standard mat costing \$20, a set of two blocks costing \$10, and a strap costing \$5. NSRHS enrolls between 30-50 students, so the school would like to provide 55 sets of equipment to ensure that all students are provided with their own supplies, meanwhile allotting for a few extra sets to keep in the school to be loaned. Thus, the total cost of yoga equipment and supplies to instate a Y12SR program in NSRHS is \$1,750.

### ***Teacher Training***

The foundation has previously granted scholarships to yoga instructors looking to enroll in one of GBY's specialized certification programs. NSRHS is requesting a scholarship for the instructor hired for the school, so that they may become Y12SR certified through GBY.

NSRHS plans to hire an instructor who has already received their 300-hour yoga certification with at least five years of experience. However, given the highly specialized nature of the Y12SR program, it is unlikely that the chosen instructor will have the necessary credentials. Enrolling in additional trainings can be quite expensive, and could deter potential hires. The Y12SR training involves either two trainings (one Y12SR Intensive Training costing \$180 and an additional Leadership Training costing \$350), or a weekend combined training that costs

\$550. Therefore, NSRHS is requesting a scholarship of approximately \$550 to finance the Y12SR certification for the chosen instructor.

### ***Teacher Stipend***

Generally, the Give Back Yoga Foundation requests donations from class attendees to compensate the instructor for their time. Monetary donations from participants are encouraged but not required, and those who cannot provide payment are still welcome to join the class.

Whatever donations are received are then split among staff leaders and the host facility.

However, given that the students at NSRHS likely have little or no money of their own and come from families who, in many cases, may be experiencing financial hardship, it is evident that requesting donations is not feasible. Therefore, it is imperative that NSRHS receives a small stipend for the yoga instructor who will be leading the Y12SR program. The average rate for a yoga instructor is \$45 per hour. NSRHS estimates that the instructor would lead three, one hour-long classes per week for the entirety of the school year (Sept 2019 – June 2020). This comes to an annual salary of approximately \$6,000.

## *Summary and Conclusion*

### *Benefits to Community and Students*

Yoga, as a mind-body practice, has been clinically proven to decrease stress and anxiety. The breathing patterns employed during sequences increases endorphins and promotes mindfulness. Through these practices, recovering addicts have noted that regular yoga practice can inhibit cravings and promote mental willpower. The practice of yoga itself has also proven to be an effective long-term treatment method and can be used in on-going recovery.

The Y12SR program is specially curated to connect addiction recovery to the benefits of a regular yoga practice. The program emphasizes adjunctive therapy through yoga, mindfulness practices, and spirituality. It promotes a spiritual community where students can learn to combat their substance abuse disorders, as well as life's additional stressors, in a holistic, healthy manner.

Implementing a Y12SR program in NSRHS would give adolescents battling addiction the opportunity to heal themselves through yoga in a safe, supportive environment. It would promote life-long, natural practices that strengthen the mind, body, and spirit; the three areas of self that fall to the detriments of addiction. This program would also work to support the community by reducing the stigma surrounding substance abuse disorders. Y12SR seeks to provide an open and inclusive space, and therefore is effective in opening pathways of communication and acceptance in the community through yoga.

### ***Comparison to Similar Projects***

This proposal presents a unique opportunity to bring a customized yoga program to a highly specialized institution to directly address substance abuse and addiction in America's youth. There are a variety of established programs working nationwide to bring yoga to students in low-income schools. Meanwhile, GBY has already formulated an effective Y12SR program that combats addiction and prevents relapse in adults. However, the intersection of addiction and adolescence is one that is often overlooked. Therefore, the proposed project is valuable because it seeks to combine two successful programs to foster heavily marginalized and highly underrepresented youths in their battle with substance abuse.

### ***Urge to Action***

The funding for this program would not only privileged an underserved community, but it would also aid in the battle against adolescent substance abuse in Massachusetts, where the opioid crisis runs rampant. By supporting efforts like recovery high schools, GBY would be promoting yoga as a means of effective, supplemental treatment for children suffering from addiction, rather than just adults. As the use of opioids in Massachusetts continues to increase, with children and adolescents continuously falling prey to the dangers of drug use, the need for a Y12SR program is pressing; as the community is desperately looking for additional ways to address this issue. Therefore, North Shore Recovery High School urges GBY's action and wishes to begin preparations for the project as soon as possible.

## *Appendix*

### *Figures and Tables*

- **Figure 1:** Percent of people who received treatment for substance abuse by age from [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)
- **Figure 2:** Average Annual Opioid-Related Deaths in MA by Region from <https://chapter55.digital.mass.gov>
- **Figure 3:** Director Michelle Lipinski and her students standing in front of NSRHS from <https://www.localsyr.com/local-news>
- **Figure 4:** Distribution of Funds for Y12SR

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***Resources***

SAMHSA’s National Helpline	<b>1-800-662-HELP (4357)</b>
National Drug Helpline	<b>1-888-633-3239</b>
National Suicide Prevention Helpline	<b>1-800-273-TALK (8255)</b>
Crisis Text Line	<b>Text NAMI to 741-741</b>
24/7/365 Crisis Hotline	<b>Text: “ANSWER” to 839863</b>